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Occupational Therapists' perspectives on the potential use of Performance Profiling in Occupational Therapy Practice

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Introduction

Client centred practice is seen to be vital to the occupational therapy profession (COT 2010). However, there are on going challenges to promote our professional values and meet the expectations of services and organisations. There is still a significant shift needed from therapist led sessions to truly collaborative therapy (Sumsion & Law 2006). As a result, the research considered an alternative method in the form of Performance Profiling utilised within sporting psychology (Butler & Hardy 1992).

Method

The research used a social constructionist methodology (Burr 2003) to investigate expert occupational therapists' perceptions of the potential of Performance Profiling within occupational therapy practice. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Cumbria. In accordance with the constructionist approach of '*learning by making*', methods used included a workshop on Performance Profiling followed by either a focus group or an unstructured interview depending on the number of participants. Participants were asked two questions – 1. To share their thoughts about Performance Profiling and 2. Whether they thought it could support OT practice. The data were analysed thematically.

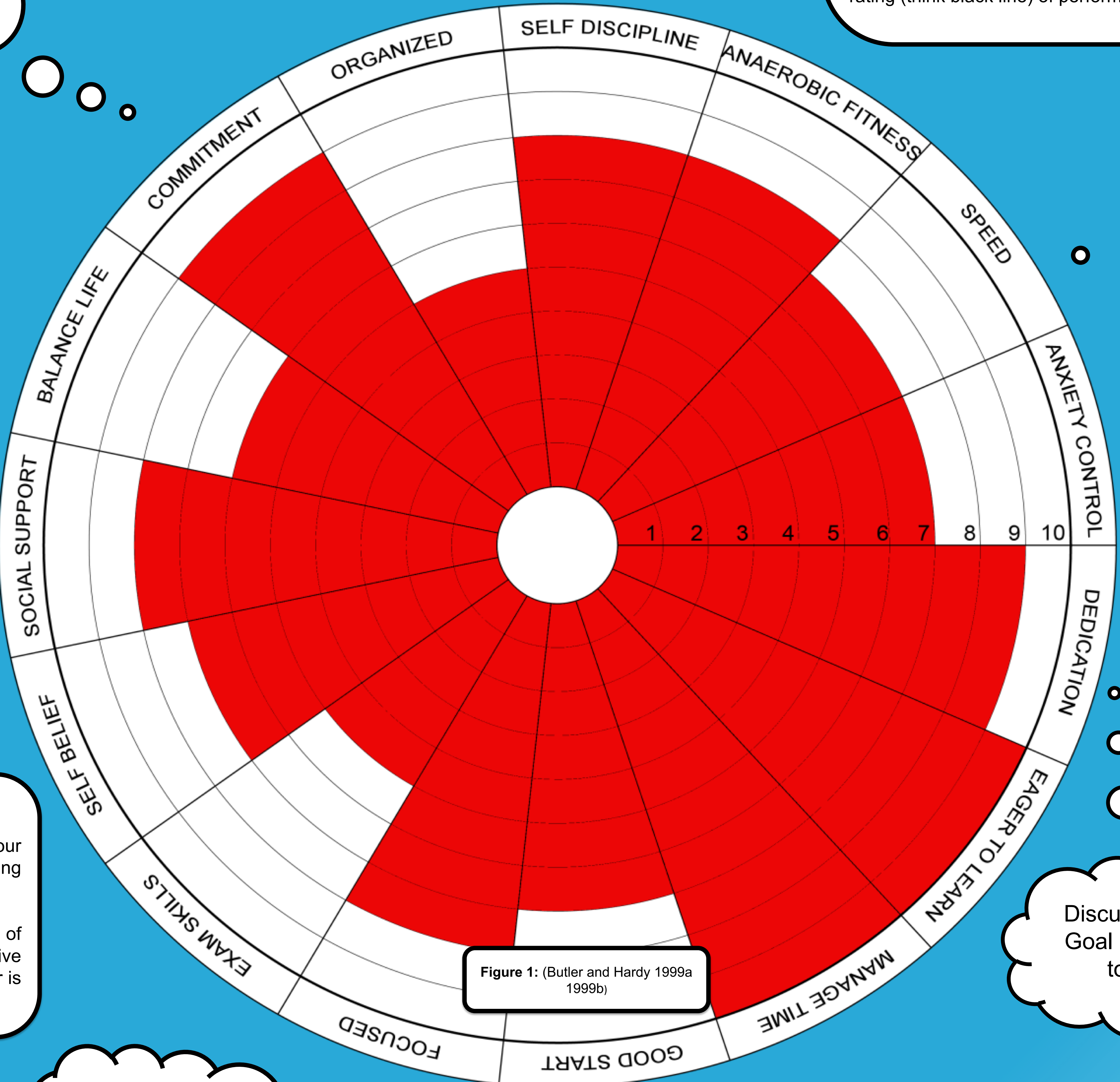
Findings

What is Performance Profiling?

Performance Profiling (Butler, 1989) has been devised as an application of Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory to sporting psychology (Doyle & Parfitt, 1997). Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory predicates on the notion people use their experiences to interpret the world, a process called construing.

Performance Profiling offers a systematic method to enhance the understanding of how athletes rate their physical, psychological and technical skill development to achieve optimum performance. This supports collaboration to build optimal interventions based on the athlete's own perception of need (Doyle & Parfitt 1997). The performance profile is utilised for the evaluation and planning of any component of performance. The technique provides understanding and quantifying perceptions of both the client and therapist.

Figure 1 is a completed profile for a University student who values their sport and education. The athlete and therapist negotiated the components of successfully engaging within their sport. These were inserted into the outside ring of the template. This was then discussed to determine the athlete's valued outcomes, current ratings (red shading) and ideal rating (think black line) of performance. Collaborative goals are then developed aimed at athlete's ideal performance



Findings

Nine participants from three countries were involved in the research. Four themes were found: theoretical perspectives, practice settings, promoting communication and education. These are illustrated in the quotes in Figure 1.

There was agreement that Performance Profiling had potential the use of supporting occupational therapy practice philosophy and promoting effective communication with clients. However, future research would need to consider is benefits to the client centred relationship.

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